

**Hartford Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children
Policies and Guidelines
NAEYC Program Accreditation Requirements (B-05)**

Purpose: Provide guidance to programs and communities on meeting the requirements of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation system under the time limitations required by legislation. Programs approved through the Head Start system must adhere to the same requirements and process using their individual system required documents and procedures.

Any program funded by the Office of Early Childhood for School Readiness, Child Day Care or Smart Start is required to achieve NAEYC Accreditation of Head Start Approval according to CGS 10-16p and/or the Child Day Care Contract. These programs must achieve accreditation by the third anniversary of funding, as determined by the original start date for funding established as the first day the children attend the program, and recorded and maintained by the Office of Early Childhood.

The Office of Early Childhood strongly encourages programs to seek the opportunity to ensure a high-quality and developmentally appropriate program for all early childhood classrooms or programs within a site. Where multiple classrooms are located within a site, careful consideration should be given to the NAEYC policy regarding "Multiple programs within the same facility". The OEC supports and expects compliance with this policy, which states:

- " a group can only be excluded from a program's NAEYC Accreditation if it is part of a separate program that has a separate public entity. A program pursuing NAEYC Accreditation must notify NAEYC of all separate programs that operate within its facility and be able to demonstrate a separate budget, administration, license and/or other criteria."

Programs Without NAEYC Accreditation and Contracted After January 1, 2004

Programs will:

- Initiate the NAEYC accreditation process at the beginning of their involvement as a state funded provider by engaging in the NAEYC self-study and assessment steps;
- submit a timeline to the Division for Young Children for the NAEYC Accreditation process which includes projected dates of submissions and visits;
- Secure appropriate technical assistance;

- Provide notification of the confirmed dates for the NAEYC visitation window and site visit to the Division for Young Children;
- Provide notification of the NAEYC accreditation decision to the Division for Young Children;
- Forward the Accreditation Decision Report and Accreditation certificate within 72 hours of receipt to the Division for Young Children.

If a program does not achieve NAEYC accreditation within three (3) years of the date of the original School Readiness funding, or maintain accreditation, or is denied an extension, it is the responsibility of the sub-grantee to immediately notify the Division for Young Children and withdrawal of funds may result; see section titled **Community Requirements**.

Maintaining NAEYC Accreditation:

To maintain compliance with NAEYC Accreditation requirements, programs must:

- Adhere to all NAEYC policies and requirements, including self-reporting and 72-hour Notification, and provide a copy of these reports, within 72 hours of receipt from NAEYC to the Division for Young Children; and
- Provide these NAEYC reports within 72 hours of receipt from NAEYC to the Division for Young Children:
 - Documentation of the results of any NAEYC on-site visits including random unannounced or verification visits to the Division for Young Children; and
 - Accreditation Decision Reports; and
 - Annual Reports with confirmation of acceptance by NAEYC.

Deferral/Denial of Programs in the NAEYC Reaccreditation Process

Programs seeking reaccreditation that receive a deferral decision following their verification visit must:

- provide the Division for Young Children a copy of the deferral report to forward to the CT Office of Early Childhood; and
- submit, in a timely manner, a detailed action plan to the Division for Young Children that addresses the issues identified in the deferral report, the persons responsible and the strategies that will be used to ensure adherence to the timelines established by NAEYC for re-submission of materials. The Division for Young Children will then forward documentation to the CT Office of Early Childhood.

Programs seeking reaccreditation that receive a denial decision following their verification visit must:

- immediately arrange, through the Division for Young Children, a meeting with the CT Office of Early Childhood School Readiness Program Manager and Accreditation Coordinator to discuss the circumstances for the denial and continued eligibility for School Readiness funding.

ACCREDITATION EXTENSION REQUESTS

In rare cases a newly funded program may require additional time to achieve NAEYC Accreditation and may be considered for a one time only extension request. The extension request process is implemented through the CT OEC Program Manager and local School Readiness Liaison as follows:

Procedures

- The program will notify the Division for Young Children of issues related to not obtaining accreditation and reaccreditation within the predetermined timeline.
- The Division for Young Children shall notify the Mayor, Chair of the Cabinet for Young Children and the CT Office of Early Childhood, Program Manager, of any pending issues regarding accreditation.
- The Division for Young Children shall consult with the Chair and members of the Cabinet for Young Children to assess and evaluate the program's request and determine the Cabinet's commitment to continue this provider's contract as a School Readiness sub-grantee.
- If the Mayor's Cabinet determines the program meets quality standards for children and families as determined by NAEYC, the Cabinet may submit a letter to the CT Office of Early Childhood to request an extension of time to achieve reaccreditation. The letter must include detailed information regarding the rationale for the request. Specific time-lines addressing the current accreditation process and the proposed extension must be included with the request. The Cabinet should be diligent in considering the programs ability to reengage in the accreditation process in an expedient manner.
- The CT Office of Early Childhood will review the extension request letter to determine the next steps as outlined in the legislation. If the CT Office of Early Childhood grants an extension, the individual

program will follow the action plan outlined for that program. A specific time period will be approved by the OEC and the individual program will develop and follow a program improvement action plan and timeline for completion of the NAEYC Accreditation process. In addition, the program will participate in the Alternative Interim Quality Assurance Process outlined below.

- The OEC will determine whether the site makes sufficient progress toward achieving accreditation within one year of the implementation of this process; or if the site is negligent in addressing areas of concern, the OEC may reallocate funding to another program or site (see section titled Removal of State Funds)

If the Hartford Cabinet for Young Children chooses not to request an extension to continue the accreditation timeline, please see section titled Community Requirements, De-funding School Readiness Programs for de-funding process.

Programs that are seeking NAEYC Accreditation renewal are not eligible for an extension. See Loss of NAEYC Accreditation below.

ALTERNATIVE INTERIM QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS:

To provide quality improvement monitoring in programs that are not NAEYC Accredited, programs will participate in Alternative Interim Quality Assurance. This process includes:

- On-site monitoring conducted by OEC and DFYC staff;
- Implementation of an OEC identified assessment tool (e.g. ITERS, ECERS, PAS, etc.) by an OEC approved reliable rater, at the program's expense;
- Development of a written program improvement action plan with reasonable and appropriate timeframes, which may be submitted and/or revised over time, detailing the process(es) the site will undertake to:
 - Address program improvement issues identified through the data and assessments such as the site visit, monitoring tool(s), NAEYC tools, and reports; and
 - Achieve NAEYC Accreditation

The OEC will determine whether the site makes sufficient progress toward achieving accreditation within one year of the implementation of this process; or if the site is negligent in addressing areas of concern, the OEC may reallocate funding to another program or site (See Removal of State Funds)

COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS

If a program does not achieve accreditation by NAEYC or secure a waiver from the CT Office of Early Childhood, there will be a withdrawal of funds by the community through the process described in this GENERAL POLICY.

LOSS OF NAEYC ACCREDITATION

If a NAEYC Accredited state funded program experiences a loss of accreditation through deferral, denial, revocation or inability to complete the renewal process according to the NAEYC timeline for renewal, the following process will be followed by the Division for Young Children:

1. Provide the appropriate OEC Program Manager with a copy of communication received from NAEYC including the Accreditation Decision Report, within 72 hours of receipt from NAEYC.
2. Submit, within one month, a detailed program improvement action plan to the OEC Program Manager that addresses the issues identified, the persons responsible and the strategies that will be used to ensure adherence to the timelines established by NAEYC for re-submission of materials.
3. Immediately arrange a meeting with the OEC Program Manager to discuss the circumstances and continued eligibility for state funding. The meeting will address the specific reasons for the loss of Accreditation.
4. The OEC will review the detailed action plan and strategies to determine the next steps.
 - a. If the OEC grants an extension, a specific time period will be approved, and the individual program will develop and follow an action plan and timeline for completion of the NAEYC Accreditation process.
 - b. If an extension is not requested, or is not granted, please see section titled Removal of State Funds.
5. For Child Day Care Contracted sites: The action plan will include the Alternative Interim Quality Assurance Process. If a program is granted this option, all children served in that location will be funded at the non-accredited rate.

REMOVAL OF STATE FUNDS

If a program does not achieve or maintain its NAEYC Accreditation according to legislative requirements, or complete the program improvement action plan with one year of notification by NAEYC that their accreditation is lost, the OEC will address this according to these steps:

1. The Division for Young Children will notify the OEC immediately.
2. The Division for Young Children will notify the appropriate OEC Program Manager with notification in writing signed by the Mayor and Superintendent;
3. The OEC Program Manager will notify the program that no new children may be enrolled in the program and identify the last date that state funds will be available to support the program.
4. For School Readiness Programs: The local School Readiness Liaison will work collaboratively with the Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children and the program to communicate, in writing, to families that
 - a. The program is unable to continue as a School Readiness program because the program did not achieve or maintain its accreditation and therefore families have the following options:
 - i. Continue with the School Readiness subsidy in the same type of School Readiness space at another School Readiness program provided by the community;
 - ii. Remain at the program with the family paying the program fee; or
 - iii. Connect families to 211 Child Care InfoLine to explore other child care availability.
 - b. The School Readiness Liaison will explore available program options in the community in order to transfer spaces in a timely fashion.
 - c. The School readiness Liaison will work to transfer the spaces to another School Readiness funded program no later than the end of the grant period.
 - d. The School Readiness Liaison will put forward proposed sites for space reallocation to the OEC for approval.
 - e. Upon OEC approval, the Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children will transfer all School Readiness spaces to a selected program(s).
5. For Child Day Care Contracted Programs: The Division for Young Children may subcontract with a new site and must submit a plan for offering currently enrolled families the opportunity to enroll in the new site. The new site is considered a newly state funded program with a three year deadline for achievement of NAEYC Accreditation. The addition of funding to an existing OEC funded program does not 'reset the clock' to a new 3-year timeframe.

6. Programs that experience a removal of state funding and subsequently achieve NAEYC Accreditation may be considered for funding in a future grant cycle.

Child Day Care Contracts

All programs serving children under the Child Day Care contracts are required to fall into one of the following categories:

- Programs currently accredited by NAEYC, designated by U.S. Health and Human Services to be a Head Start grantee or delegate, or approved by the Council on Accreditation (COA).
- A new subcontractor, currently pursuing NAEYC accreditation or approval by the National After School Association (NAA) or such after school accreditation as the OEC Commissioner may approve; and on track to achieve accreditation within a three year window from the date upon which they first became a subcontractor. Programs in this category must have an annual OEC approved environmental rating scale completed at their own expense, utilizing a OEC approved rater; or
- A program that is participating in the Alternative Interim Quality Assurance process (see Child Day Care provision) as a result of having NAEYC Accreditation revoked.